

Best Practices for Excellent Performance

The attached list of Best Practices was developed as part of the ongoing and overarching goal of creating a culture of excellence in the way the Town performs its functions and conduct the public's business. The practices were discussed and agreed to by the Council and Planning Commission at a joint retreat held on May 24, 2006.

The best practices were derived from statements and policies set forth in the Council Code of Conduct and the Planning Commissioner's Handbook. Although initiated through a Council/Planning Commission Retreat, the best practices are applicable to all Commissions. They are organized into six categories (see below) and are further defined in the attached document.

1. Professional
2. Customer service oriented
3. Good judgment
4. Objective/fair
5. Efficient
6. Persuasive

The purpose of the "best practices" document is to help foster awareness and understanding of what constitutes "good practice" in the Town of Los Gatos. At the same time, the document can help Council members and Commissioners gauge and improve their own individual performances. For example, the Chair/Mayor can use the document to help manage public meetings by establishing guidelines for judging the effectiveness and appropriateness of particular comments and behaviors. The question of whether to intervene and curtail comments is often difficult to determine. This document can help all Council members and Commissioners make distinctions between what is effective/appropriate and ineffective/inappropriate.

1. PROFESSIONAL

In practice, this means...	And avoiding...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Understanding the roles of standards, guidelines and the General Plan in decision-making▪ Being prepared▪ Offering comments with respect*▪ Respecting the role of the Mayor/Chair in running the meeting▪ Respecting the contributions of individual Commissioners and Council members.▪ Respecting staff and the Town's consultant's recommendation and comments▪ Being careful of your comments since they can be taken out of context, misinterpreted and lead to litigation <p>* The term "respect" is used here and elsewhere to indicate positive regard, consideration, and appreciation for others. Respect does not imply agreement. It does imply mutuality: Those who receive respect also show respect and vice-versa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sarcastic or condescending remarks▪ Comments that discredit the Town or its consultants/staff (e.g. damage the reputation; disgrace, distrust)▪ Comments that are inappropriate or that can be taken out of context▪ Rambling, pontificating, and speechmaking▪ Lecturing a colleague▪ Disrespectful mannerisms, tone of voice, and gestures

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTED

In practice, this means...	And avoiding...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Respecting the rights of residents, businesses and property owners to pursue their goals and dreams▪ Asking questions of applicants during the presentation and rebuttal▪ Recognizing that the words and decisions used by the PC and TC have tremendous emotional impact on the applicants and their quality of life▪ Being solution oriented within the framework of the Town's policies and procedures as a way to help the applicant▪ Recognizing that there are multiple customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Raising objections or questions after public hearing is closed▪ Redesigning from the dais▪ Trying to convince or persuade the applicant that your point of view is correct▪ Lecturing an applicant

3. USE GOOD JUDGMENT

In practice, this means...	And avoiding...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Making decisions by reading the General Plan in context▪ Granting an exception when the regulation allows for it and if the situation warrants it▪ Taking issues that are not addressed by regulations “off-line” from the project being considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Focusing on one policy in the General Plan to oppose a project without considering other policies that support the project.▪ Being overly literal when interpreting policy▪ Looking for a way to deny a project because it is challenging▪ Being arbitrary▪ Continuing a project when denial or a condition of approval will suffice▪ Holding up a project for an issue that is not specifically addressed by policies and standards

4. OBJECTIVE/FAIR

In practice, this means...	And avoiding...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Performing your duties and serving in a quasi-judicial manner▪ Demonstrating fairness▪ Listening to all evidence and considering all information▪ Setting aside personal bias▪ Using existing policies and regulations to evaluate a project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Personalizing your decision (i.e., I have a small house...)▪ Micromanaging an applicant's project▪ Evaluating a project based on personal experience or expertise

5. EFFICIENT

In practice, this means...	And avoiding...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Asking questions of staff prior to the meeting▪ Identifying ahead of time primary issues or concerns and stay focused on them▪ Outlining evidence supporting findings as the hearing progresses▪ Identifying and prioritizing your primary concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Waiting to ask questions at the meeting▪ Delving into minutia▪ Waiting to create findings after the close of the hearing▪ Having so many concerns that you start to dominate the meeting▪ Duplicating comments already made▪ Allowing time constraints to trump excellence in planning▪ Orally listing reasons for opposing a project after the vote (better to state the reasons in writing if there is a personal desire to ensure that they are included in the record)

6. PERSUASIVE

In practice, this means...	And avoiding...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Respecting the views of your fellow Council/Commission members▪ Using logic and specific examples to make your case and convince your colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Dismissing other points of view, making personal attacks, or arguing with your fellow Council/Commission members▪ Appealing to emotions and feelings▪ Terms like "I feel" rather than citing codes and policies